

villagers in Haiti to the faculty of the Harvard Medical School to policymakers at the United Nations (Kidder, 2004). Combining his extensive field experience with sophisticated research and medical analyses, Farmer upended traditional notions of health care initially in Haiti and ultimately in the entire world. He reveals that one of his secrets to profound change is the willingness of leaders to do "unglamorous scut work." Adds Farmer, "[The] reluctance to do scut work is why a lot of my peers don't stick with this kind of work." Although educational leaders must spend time making speeches and attending board meetings, the leaders aspiring to cultural change will take the risk, as Superintendent Stan Scheer of the Murrieta Valley Unified School District in California has done, of taking a turn as a substitute teacher and spending time with bus drivers at five o'clock on a frosty morning. No doubt some leaders will insist that every job has value and there is no such thing as "scut work" in schools. If so, then back up those words with personal example and public actions.

From:

Reeves, D. (2009.) Leading Change in Your  
School: How to Conquer Myths, Build  
Commitment and Get Results.  
VA: ASCD.

## 5

### Confronting the Myths of Change Leadership

Wander into any bookstore and find the section labeled "Leadership," and you'll see a host of historical figures whom you are directed to emulate: Elizabeth I, Moses, Catherine the Great, Henry Ford, Attila the Hun—the list is endless. Never mind that the list includes one of the foremost figures of Judaism and a notorious anti-Semite, along with monarchs and barbarians who engaged in bloodlust, torture, and conquest. They were leaders who certainly created change, and, because they are conveniently absent from the scene, they can be used as props in the latest psychobabble about change leadership. It is less popular but more constructive for our purposes to deconstruct some of the popular myths of change leadership, and that is the task of this chapter.

Calling something a "myth" is not necessarily pejorative. Many belief systems, for example, share similar myths for creation, the seasons, the weather, and the development of the human species. Although myths may be manufactured for convenience (I can't think of another reason for the bilious suggestion that Attila was a leader to be emulated), other myths endure because they provide explanations for a phenomenon that can be challenging and confusing. Moreover,

myths that are widely accepted take on a life of their own through repetition, if not through rigorous inquiry.

If the Leadership section of the bookstore were really to have a book that synthesized the modern mythology of leadership, the title would be *Leadership by Narcissus: How to Achieve Greatness by Being Obsessed with Yourself*. Truth in labeling, of course, is not the hallmark of retail sales, so you are unlikely to see such a title in a bookstore anytime soon. However, if the substance of a book, particularly its pretensions of historical scholarship, leads the reader to narcissism rather than teamwork, then *caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware.

In this chapter, we consider seven popular myths of leadership:

- Myth #1: Plan your way to greatness.
- Myth #2: Just a little bit better is good enough.
- Myth #3: We want you to change us . . . *really*.
- Myth #4: People love to collaborate.
- Myth #5: Hierarchy changes systems.
- Myth #6: Volume equals VOLUME.
- Myth #7: The leader is the perfect composite of every trait.

## Myth #1: Plan Your Way to Greatness

Perhaps the most pervasive myth in change leadership is that planning—particularly complex, large-scale, and supposedly “strategic” planning—leads to effective change. As Chapter 9 suggests, the evidence for that proposition is absent not only in education but in the business world as well. In an evaluation of school plans, for example, my colleagues at the Leadership and Learning Center learned that student proficiency was dramatically higher (46.3 percent compared with 25.6 percent, as expressed by the average percent proficient on tests from elementary through high school) when comparing schools with the

lowest scores on plan format to schools with the highest scores on plan format. That is not a misprint; schools that excelled in format had lower achievement. Thus, the emphasis that schools placed on excellent formatting was worse than a waste of time; it was *inversely* related to student achievement.

If you must have a plan, then learn from the schools that have done it well. Establish clear vision and values, expressing who you are and who you are not. If you can’t write your mission and values on the back of your business card and you can’t say them without reference to notes, then they are not influencing your daily reality. Appendix B provides an example of a “Plan on a Page,” in which a school system with a long track record of improved achievement and equity expressed its commitment to a clear mission, vision, and goals on a single page.

## Myth #2: Just a Little Bit Better Is Good Enough

Perhaps a few readers will remember Andy Taylor, the amiable sheriff of Mayberry, played by Andy Griffith, star of the eponymous television show. When he was not dealing with Barney, Opie, Aunt Bee, and Otis in his comedic role, Griffith made his living as a pitchman for a cereal company, assuring us that his product was “just a little bit better.” His model has a distinguished line of descendants in leadership consultants who suggest that successful firms do not do one thing much better but do many things just a little bit better (Peters & Waterman, 1982). This incremental approach has been endorsed more recently by legions of people who believe, with abundant sincerity but a paucity of evidence, that small changes by the enthusiastic few will change the system. They earnestly quote Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

In fact, small groups do not change schools. The salient variable for multiple programs is not their brand name or content, but the degree to which they are implemented in schools (Reeves, 2008, 2009). Rather than acknowledge that the incremental approach itself is deeply flawed, the most common response of senior leadership is to abandon the first ineffective incremental change and replace it with yet another incremental change effort, followed by the same incomplete and ineffective implementation. Although the hope is that achievement will improve incrementally as implementation improves, the evidence does not sustain this hope. In fact, in surprising research, we found that for many change initiatives, implementation that was moderate or occasional was no better than implementation that was completely absent. Only deep implementation had the desired effect on student achievement.

"Just a little bit better" is appealing because it suggests that the change initiative need only appeal to those who embraced it—those who attended the conference, read the book, heard the speaker, or were already engaged in the change before the leader requested it. Deep and sustainable change, by contrast, requires changes in behavior among those who do not welcome the change. In ancient and contemporary societies, myths persist because they transfer responsibility from ourselves to external forces beyond our control. As long as we believe the myth that incremental change will work, we do not have to engage in the unpleasant task of implementing change, and we avoid the difficult truth that behavior precedes belief—that is, most people must engage in a behavior before they accept that it is beneficial; then they see the results, and then they believe that it is the right thing to do. Certainly the payoffs are there when leaders take the initiative and achieve high levels of implementation, but as this book demonstrates in case after case, the implementation precedes buy-in; it does not follow it.

### Myth #3: We Want You to Change Us . . . Really

Educational leaders, particularly those at senior levels, are often implored to become change leaders. The board members who hire them stress the need for a new direction, and their subordinates willingly talk about the flaws of the previous leader. Change in the superintendent, chief academic officer, or other senior position, they reason, is at last an opportunity to create meaningful change. In truth, what they mean is that this is an opportunity for *other people* to change. The same board members who demanded that the new superintendent create change are shocked when they discover that part of the change the new superintendent has in mind will include adjustments in the same board members' pet programs. The same cabinet members who expected that, at a minimum, change would bring the opportunity to put their competitors in the endless game of organizational politics in their place are dismayed to find that part of the change the new leader has in mind is not a different set of winners and losers, but a change in the game itself.

In truth, any change will meet resistance, because change is loss.

In fact, meaningful change is a particular kind of loss. Are the following stages familiar to you?

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

These are, of course, the stages of grief described by Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969). Even the most productive and essential changes represent the death of past practice; therefore, for people to have genuine enthusiasm for change, we must believe that they have an

enthusiasm for death and loss—a premise that demands challenge. In almost every case I have observed in thousands of schools on five continents, the kind of change for which people have the greatest enthusiasm is change directed at other people, other practices, and other institutions. I cannot say that I recall a single example of genuine and sustained enthusiasm for change when the one claiming enthusiasm is the one who is also grieving the loss of past practices and all of the emotional and psychological gains that those past practices brought. These losses are the same whether we are giving up the taste of the extra helping of bacon, the third martini, or the flexing of academic power that comes with long-practiced grading, teaching, and leadership practices. Change is loss, and leaders who do believe in the myth of the popularity of change had better start searching for the Change Fairy.

#### Myth #4: People Love to Collaborate

What could be better than collaboration? We are social animals, after all, and anyone who has observed teachers as they assemble each fall can testify to the genuine enthusiasm with which they greet one another, share stories, and re-form their personal relationships. However, there is, as Roland Barth (1990) reminds us, a difference between congeniality and collegiality. The former is important and can provide the social lubricant that allows people to work together under stressful circumstances. But it is not the same as the difficult and challenging work of collaboration. To be effective, professional collaboration requires time, practice, and accountability. Schools that claim, for example, to be professional learning communities but fail to provide time for collaboration are engaging in self-delusion. But those schools that provide generous amounts of time—in some cases 45 to

60 minutes three to five times each week—but fail to provide practice and accountability for effective collaboration are equally delusional, though they can engage in the fantasy of collaboration at a more leisurely pace.

Collaboration can take many forms, from the focus on an individual student to the development of multidisciplinary lessons to the analysis of recent achievement data. Every collaboration meeting, however, must have defined results with specific and measurable adult actions. Just as students should be able to articulate, “If I learn this lesson well, I should be able to . . .,” so, too, educators and administrators should be able to say, “If this meeting is successful, then we should be able to . . .”

Consider the example of collaborative scoring of student work. This topic is a good place to begin collaborative efforts because it gets at the very heart of the transformation of academic expectations into the daily reality of student work. In one case, I asked 50 teachers to evaluate several samples of student work, a process that allowed me to calculate the degree of agreement or disagreement after my professional development efforts. A high degree of agreement would reflect the effectiveness of my instruction in standards and assessment. In addition to considering the level of agreement among the teachers, I could also evaluate the speed with which they came to agreement on each piece of work.

The results were illuminating, particularly for a professional developer operating under the influence of the myth that if I delivered a seminar with sufficient enthusiasm and wit, then the teachers in the audience were better served by listening to my wisdom than by engaging in the hard work of practicing what they learned. Authors, too, must sacrifice their myths. This quickly became evident when, after six hours of a terrifically inspiring lecture on the value of standards, assessment, and collaboration, I gave samples of student work to the 50

teachers and calculated the results. With a four-point scale, one might think that the lowest score possible for collaboration on an assignment would be 25 percent, with a quarter of participating teachers selecting each of the four possible student marks. Thus it took math-defying incompetence for me to conclude that the mean level of agreement was only 19 percent, a score that was possible only because some participants, given splendid instruction, crystal clear rubrics, and abundant time, could not come to any conclusion about the work.

It gets worse. I calculated the time it took each group to finish each collaborative scoring assignment, and the average time was a bit less than 45 minutes. I not only did a terrible job; I took a long time to do a terrible job. The disagreements among the participants became, at times, angry and emotional. Their supposed enthusiasm for a day of professional collaboration disintegrated into a sullen wait for the day's seminar to end.

This is the critical juncture in any collaborative effort. If your goal is popularity, then you are finished, and professional collaboration will meet the same fate as every other change that failed because the true standard was popularity, rather than effectiveness. If, however, you are committed to effective change, then persistence through the initial challenges to achieve the essential short-term wins will be necessary, even when that persistence is unpopular.

Collaboration requires practice, not merely instruction. Effective change does not happen with seminars and speeches, but with effective and repeated practice of the professional behaviors that you expect to change. In the case of this seminar in effective assessment, the same 50 educators with the same students and the same staff developer continued to hone their collaboration skills. It was not my instruction but their willingness to engage in focused practice that improved their level of agreement—after approximately 18 additional hours of work (24 professional development hours in total)—from 19 percent to 92

percent. The same group improved not only the accuracy and consistency of their assessment of student work but also their speed, reducing the time required to evaluate the work from 45 minutes to 9 minutes.

Consider offering the following challenge to your colleagues: "This will be difficult and challenging work. It's going to take time and practice. But if you hang in there with me, we will not only improve the quality and consistency of our feedback to students, but we will also save time by dramatically accelerating the speed with which we can collaboratively score student work."

Effective collaboration is not something that people seek or particularly enjoy—at least not in the early stages. Rather, the practices are sustained because the leader develops evidence of effectiveness. Although I cannot say that collaborative scoring is a universally popular practice, it is undeniably true that every faculty in the world appreciates the opportunity to save time. Moreover, even the most cynical observer would acknowledge that a faculty that provides feedback with a consistency level of 92 percent will be perceived by students, parents, and colleagues as more fair and effective than a faculty whose level of consistency is less than 20 percent.

## Myth #5: Hierarchy Changes Systems

Governments, educational organizations, and schools themselves are hierarchical organizations. Although the original "principal" was, in fact, the "principal teacher" who led by example and was, first and foremost, a teacher, today's principal is widely expected to be both the instructional leader of the school and the administrative manager. For readers who reject the "manager" title, I gently, respectfully, and firmly suggest that you examine today's task list along with the contents of your inbox and desktop. Count the number of tasks, pieces of paper,

and priorities screaming for your attention that are best categorized as management of people, projects, and paper and those that are better categorized as instructional leadership. If the former outnumber the latter, it does not mean that you are unable or unwilling to be an instructional leader, but it suggests that it is unwise to abjure the responsibilities of management.

The role of the hierarchy in organizational change is typically to communicate the essential message of change. This appealing theory, when applied to school change, embraces the "telephone" effect, named after the children's game in which a story is whispered around the room from one child to the next, with diminishing degrees of accuracy. In the adult version of the game, the superintendent whispers to the deputy, who then whispers the same—or almost the same—story to the assistant superintendent. The story—or a pretty close variation of it—is repeated to principals who pass it along—or something fairly close—to the assistant principals, who, if they have time, will attempt to recall what they heard to department heads and grade-level leaders, who may share it with faculty members. Months later, the superintendent is shocked to learn that the change initiative that was crystal clear when she first announced it is, at the classroom level, shrouded in mystery or wildly distorted.

Am I exaggerating? Here are examples I have observed personally in my work in schools. What began as a superintendent's effort to improve the relevance of homework and associate it with more direct feedback from the teacher was transmuted, within days, into the claim by more than one employee that "we aren't allowed to give the claim by more than one employee that 'we aren't allowed to give homework anymore.' An attempt to suggest that grades should be linked to student academic proficiency became 'we won't have transcripts and letter grades anymore.'" The suggestion that a school should evaluate student achievement against academic content standards became "we're going back to psychological tests and value judgments

of outcomes-based education." In other cases, what district leaders regarded as consistent and nonnegotiable literacy programs varied wildly from one school to another. Assessment practices that were consistent and uniform one year became fragmented and ineffective after only a few changes in key administrative assignments at the building and district levels.

The alternative to hierarchy is not the absence of administrative leadership. Superintendents, principals, and other administrative leaders are necessary but insufficient elements of change leadership. Networks of teachers and administrators offer a powerful and fast method of communication, sharing effective practice, responding to challenges, and providing practical insights in a way that administrative hierarchies cannot do. In the recent book *Change Wars*, Hargreaves and Fullan (2009) and I (Reeves, 2009) provide examples of how networks can influence the direction, scope, and complexity of change that vastly exceeds that of traditional hierarchy. Their examples come from diverse settings, including education, the military, international finance, and medicine. Three contemporary examples further illuminate the power of networks.

First, the Connecticut Department of Education has conducted an annual "science fair" for the past three years. It is a remarkable event at which the state superintendent, state school board president, and state teacher's union president unanimously endorse the idea of teachers networking with teachers. The remarkably varied examples of effective practice provide a direct link, teacher to teacher, that would otherwise have been dozens of "degrees of separation" from the original idea in Bristol to the teacher who could apply the same idea in Hartford. Similar networks have been established in Virginia, Nevada, Texas, and California.

Second, the Wallace Foundation has supported networks of superintendents in intensive long-term reflection ([www.wallacefoundation.org](http://www.wallacefoundation.org)).

org/elan). Elmore (2009) reports the remarkable impact of consistent and sustained communication among superintendents who are otherwise disconnected from opportunities for improved practice.

Third, there are a growing number of noncommercial Web-based networks designed to allow educational leaders to exchange ideas, debate concepts, and engage in direct contact without hierarchy boundaries. Examples include [www.EdTrust.org](http://www.EdTrust.org), where a search engine provides direct access to the details on student achievement in schools that are demographically similar to the school of the person making the inquiry, and [www.AllThingsPLC.info](http://www.AllThingsPLC.info), where participants can share ideas, download useful tools, and get personal feedback from researchers and authors, all without a single pop-up advertisement or sales solicitation. With the publication of this book, the commerce-free [www.ChangeLeaders.info](http://www.ChangeLeaders.info) will join those ranks, providing educators around the world with the opportunity to share ideas and communicate directly. I have described "Level 5 Networks" as those that are sustained not by hierarchical imperative but by shared values. When resources are tight and anxiety levels are high, the essential question is this: Will this network be sustained without budgetary support or administrative mandates? My conclusion is not that hierarchy is irrelevant but that it is inherently limited by time and resources. Even the most benevolent monarch will perish, and the most generous budget will encounter a downturn in the economic cycle. Sustainable change, therefore, is a function not of a willful authority figure but of a shared value system.

## Myth #6: Volume Equals VOLUME

If there is a consistent theme in the research on organizational change, it is that opposition is inevitable and the search for universal buy-in is

a chimera. This does not validate the leader who runs roughshod over opposition, but it does require that opposition be placed into perspective. Leaders will never, for example, get 100 percent of the faculty to enjoy professional collaboration, particularly when some faculty members define their professional independence, self-respect, and personal identity precisely in terms of not having to collaborate. In fact, they take a good deal of pride in being the only teacher to require this or the most demanding faculty member when it comes to that. Consistency to them is not a sign of fairness but of mediocrity. In these cases, the goal of the leader is not to ask the faculty member to enjoy collaboration, but rather to cooperate in collaborative efforts.

Before spending too much time on the opposition, it is useful to quantify it. In *The Learning Leader* (Reeves, 2006b), I published the results of surveys of 2,000 teachers and administrators. Since that time, we have added an additional 4,000 respondents to the database, but the results have not changed. On more than a dozen different change initiatives, we find that 17 percent of teachers were willing to lead the effort, assisting their colleagues, sharing their knowledge, and facilitating professional learning. An additional 53 percent were willing to model the change efforts in their classrooms, allowing others to observe their efforts. The third category, "fence-sitters," were aware of the change initiative but had not yet implemented it, and they made up 28 percent of the sample. That leaves 2 percent—the Toxic 2 percent—who were either defiantly unaware of leadership expectations or, more likely, actively opposed them. The Toxic 2 can make quite a bit of noise, thus perpetuating the myth that their "VOLUME," as a measure of the organizational decibels that they generate, is the same as their "volume," a rational quantification of their relative numbers among the faculty. The challenge for every time-starved leader is how to spend time and which faculty members to engage. The evidence suggests that leaders are better advised to lavish their time, appreciation, and support

on 70 percent of faculty—the 17 percent who are leaders and the 53 percent who are models—rather than continue to engage in ineffective and emotionally draining combat with the Toxic 2.

### Myth #7: The Leader Is the Perfect Composite of Every Trait

We return to the bookstore section on Leadership, populated not only by volumes about barbarians and faux histories of monarchs, but also by thoughtful reviews of exceptional women and men who were extraordinary leaders. Although we can certainly learn from the lives of Harriet Tubman and George Washington, Martin Luther King Jr. and Simón Bolívar, Abraham Lincoln and Susan B. Anthony, we are poorly advised to compare our leadership efforts to these historical ideals. In fact, for every historical biography of a great leader, there are thousands of untold stories of unnamed team members, colleagues, friends, and family who contributed to the successes of those whose pictures adorn the covers of even the best leadership studies. The myth is not that these people led lives worthy of study, but rather that our greatest lesson should be the formation of a singular leadership composite. The complexities of change leadership require not the perfect composite of every trait, but rather a team that exhibits leadership traits and exercises leadership responsibilities in a way that no individual leader, past or present, possibly could.



By considering leadership myths, our purpose is not to criticize and destroy, but to create constructive alternatives. We can develop leaders whose focus and vision prevent them from believing that plans

are a substitute for action. We can nurture leaders who understand that deep implementation, not a timid incremental approach, is essential for systemic change. We can protect leaders from the seductive allure of those whose enthusiasm for change extends only to others but never to themselves. We can provide time, patience, and support for leaders to create opportunities for collaboration that is meaningful and effective. We can participate in networks and thereby create change in a manner that is faster and more effective than change filtered through hierarchy alone. We can label the Toxic 2 for what it is, a tiny minority that creates noise far out of proportion to the number of stakeholders it represents. And most of all, we can participate in a leadership team, relieving both the senior leader and the organization of the myth that perfection in leadership exists or should be sought.

The rest of this book is about the imperfect work of groups of imperfect people who nevertheless seek to implement and sustain change that will bring their organizations closer to their ideals and values.



# 6

## Leadership Leverage: Focusing on Changes with the Greatest Results

School leaders are often held accountable for things beyond their control. The skills that students bring to kindergarten; the educational attainment of families in the community; the local tax base; the pool of available teacher candidates—all these factors affect student achievement. Because complaining about things outside our control is a demonstrably ineffective leadership strategy, it is more productive to focus on the key factors that we can directly influence, including these: teacher assignment, professional development, collaboration, time, and meetings.

### Teacher Assignment

The most important resource any education leader allocates is teachers. Ask yourself this question: “Does every student in my school have an equal opportunity to receive an education from the best teachers and take the most advanced courses that we can offer?” The all-too-typical answer is that the least experienced and least qualified teachers are

assigned to the classes with the most complex and challenging student needs, whereas the teachers with the most experience and highest qualifications teach the most motivated and self-directed students.

In a recent study, Yun and Moreno (2006) suggest that this problem is pervasive, with schools whose student populations are dominated by African American and Hispanic students significantly less likely to have certified teachers and access to advanced classes than schools where white and Asian students dominate the student population. It doesn't have to be that way.

Consider the example of Whittier Union High School District in California. The district has more than 13,500 high school students, more than 80 percent of whom are Latino and a large percentage of whom are economically disadvantaged. Superintendent Sandy Thorstenson has seen the percentage of students passing the state math exam rise from 37 percent in 2001 to 79 percent in 2006. It is no accident that many senior teacher-leaders agreed to take on the challenge of struggling math students.

In most cases, principals and department heads have the authority to ensure that teacher and course assignments are equitable. But in some districts, collective bargaining agreements limit the ability of leaders to change course assignments of teachers. Thus the most experienced teachers can choose to work with the most advantaged students, and the least experienced teachers—including many who are not qualified to teach the classes to which they are assigned—dominate the faculties of struggling schools.

Even in these situations, however, leaders can use creative options to improve the equitable distribution of teachers. Even when bargaining agreements prevent leaders from offering financial incentives to teachers who take on challenging classes in disadvantaged schools, creative leaders can offer nonfinancial incentives. For example, principals should consider offering teachers in the toughest classes

lower class sizes, more planning time, more professional development opportunities, and greater levels of self-direction. More important, leaders must attend to every teacher's basic needs, such as personal safety and professional respect. Without them, even the most creative financial and nonfinancial incentives will not attract teachers to challenging teaching environments.

## Professional Development

Leaders set the direction of the professional development agenda. Unfortunately, some schools are still influenced by vendors who cram every available second of professional development time with mind-numbing workshops. Ironically, we may find 500 teachers in a dark auditorium listening to an expert lecture at length about the need for differentiated instruction—in precisely the same way to each teacher. If your school is stuck in this model of professional development, consider focusing on a few things: what to teach, how to teach it, how to meet the needs of individual students, and how to build internal capacity. With an emphasis on internal capacity, the leadership of professional development efforts comes from the faculty itself, and a large part of professional education takes place in the classroom while teachers are engaged in authentic teaching. For example, at Ocean View Elementary School in Norfolk, Virginia, principal Lauren Campsen and a team of grade-level leaders provide professional development opportunities throughout the year, including coaching, model lessons, and data analysis. Teachers learn about differentiated instruction through hands-on differentiated professional development. Half of Ocean View's students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, and 62 percent of the students are ethnic minorities. In 2001, 53 percent of

students were proficient in reading, and in 2006, more than 90 percent of students met that standard.

## Collaboration

Imagine a football game in which each referee had a different opinion about the shape of the ball, the dimensions of the field, and the height of the goalposts. In the event of such a calamity, all the spectators would rise and yell, "That's not fair!" Yet the same scenario plays out every day in English, science, social studies, and mathematics classes, as teachers interpret "proficiency" in their own way.

Because fairness is as important inside the classroom as on the athletic field, effective leaders allocate faculty time to collaboration. In Roland Barth's (1990) dichotomy, this term does not imply just *congeniality*, but also *collegiality*. The former is about getting along in the tradition of hot coffee, good bagels, and little professional challenge; the latter is about the tough work of examining real student needs. After all, if the adults cannot agree on what proficiency means, then how are students supposed to figure it out?

In Bristol, Connecticut, former superintendent Mike Wasta and current superintendent Philip Streifer have made collaborative scoring part of the ethic of the school system's improvement efforts in the past several years. Rather than traditional faculty meetings, teachers and administrators collaboratively score real examples of student work. When they disagree, they work out their disagreements, clarify the scoring guides, and as a result improve the clarity of the assignments.

In Wayne Township, Indiana, superintendent Terry Thompson knows that teachers may not always agree on scoring student assignments. But he has some schools post on their data boards the percentage of teacher agreement on collaborative scoring exercises. If the

percentage falls below 80 percent, then the faculty knows that they must work on the clarity and consistency of their scoring.

## Time

Principals and superintendents can exert considerable influence over the allocation of time within the school day. For example, schools that devote an exceptional amount of time to literacy—three hours a day in elementary school and double periods in middle and high school—not only perform better in English language arts but also show improved performance in science, social studies, and mathematics (Reeves, 2004a). Of course, any change in the schedule involves trade-offs—when more time is devoted to literacy, fewer hours are available for other subjects. It is not necessary to engage in every subject every day. Some schools alternate science and social studies, providing an extra period for literacy. This requires the use of "power standards" (Ainsworth, 2003) and the deliberate decision to focus on only the most essential parts of the social studies and science curriculums rather than frantically covering every chapter under the illusion that coverage is equivalent to learning. In addition, explicit literacy instruction can be effectively included in wonderfully engaging ways in music, art, physical education, science, technology, and social studies classes.

Whatever the solution to challenges in scheduling, effective leaders must provide more time during the school day. Asking teachers to "work smarter" without giving them more time is not a sufficient solution when students are several years behind in reading. In addition, after-school and summer school programs may be part of the solution, but they alone are not sufficient to meet the needs of students who are lagging behind in literacy. This is particularly true when students most

in need are least likely to participate in after-school and summer school programs.

## Meetings

Principals and superintendents control meetings, which have an enormous influence on the way time is used. The same people who complain about a lack of time sometimes waste hundreds of person-hours reading announcements and tolerating political agendas. Instead, they could say, "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I have provided our usual administrative announcements in e-mail and written form, so we will devote the rest of our meeting to the following learning activity . . .," thus putting themselves literally and figuratively on the same side of the table as the faculty. Faculty meetings, formerly dominated by dull announcements and endless discussions, would then focus on student learning, creative teaching strategies, collaborative scoring, and the development of engaging assessments and individualized instruction.

# 7

## The Right Team: Selecting Teachers and Administrators

Of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality. Linda Darling-Hammond (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999) has been the foremost advocate of the effect of teacher quality on student achievement, and similar conclusions have been reached by Yun and Moreno (2006), Haycock (1998), and many others. The effect of leadership on student achievement was documented extensively by Goodlad (1994) and more recently by Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) and by Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004).

The practical question is this: How do we use this research to make better selections of teachers and principals? School leaders are frustrated with the limitations of interviews. After all, more than 90 percent of interviewees claim that they "like people" (Buckingham, 2007), even though our personal experience shows that such a high percentage is an exaggeration. Moreover, as Buckingham explains, most candidates magically transform their weaknesses into strengths. The first candidate admits reluctantly, "I guess I am a bit of a